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Small-Scale Agriculture Today



Office for Small-Scale Agriculture

FALL 1988

Alternative Opportunities For U.S. Farmers

AT ISSUE....A MEMORANDUM

Support for this memorandum is excellent! We were told that "it is the USA Today of agricultural information." We like that comment. Information is the key ingredient for small-scale agriculturalists to better understand today's complex agricultural industry. Too frequently, people believe that drastic changes in enterprise selection or business procedures are necessary to cope in the highly competitive business of farming. In reality, it can be as simplistic as the title "The Perfect Tomato-The Ideal Blackberry: Making Money in Small-Scale Agriculture." The latter is a new 9 minute video looking at small-scale farming as a business with a bottom line. Profit is what counts! To those who adjust....opportunities. It is your decision. Select an enterprise....and commit to operating--your small-scale farm, as a profitable enterprise.

The cost is \$10 per video tape and includes handling and postage. Checks should be made payable and sent to OGPA Photographic Division, USDA Office of Information, Room 4404 South Building, Washington, D.C., 20250-1300.

TOPICS AND TECHNOLOGY

Fox Ranching - North Central Fox Producers Association offers educational information/activities in the form of a quarterly newsletter, seminars and live fox shows. Contact - Mike Liane, (NCFPA) President, RT. 1, Devils Lake, ND 58301. Telephone (701) 473-5373.

Information for Vegetable Growers - "Proceedings 1988 Illinois Vegetable Growers Schools." Make check for \$7 (includes postage and handling) to the University of Illinois, Department of Horticulture, Plant Science Lab, 1201 South

Dorner Drive, Urbana, IL 61801. Telephone John M. Gerber, (217) 244-4232.

Tractor Loaders - A new line of pre-assembled loaders featuring a "Quick-On" design to be used with Kubota tractors is available. Contact - KMW, Inc., P.O. Box 327, Sterling, KS 67579-0327.

Poultry Fanciers Crow - The United States produced more than 5 billion broilers last year; 280 million laying hens were at work producing 69 billion eggs; and the average American ate 62.7 pounds of chicken, 15.1 pounds of turkey and 249 eggs. Who said "chicken feed" is not important!

"Beef and Sheep Farming in the Allegheny Highlands." An analysis of alternative management strategies on small farms and farmer reactions. Cost is \$2 per copy. Contact - Bill Case, Office of Publications, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV 26506. Telephone (304) 293-6368.

New East Coast Potato - A new baking potato that is more moist and whiter than the most popular variety is now available. The new potato, described as pure white, is called Coastal Russet and will be available this fall. It has been released for distribution by experiment stations in ME, NY, FL, VA, and NJ. Contact - Kathleen G. Haynes, Research Plant Geneticist, USDA-ARS, Plant Sciences Institute, Beltsville, MD 20705. Telephone (301) 344-3405.

Technology: Genetic Shield to Weed-Killers - "Scientists at Monsanto have successfully transferred into soybeans a gene that protects plants against Roundup weed killer. Field tests are expected next year." Chicago Tribune, 8-25-88.

Small "Farm" Agriculture - Whether you have a few acres in the country, or just a backyard garden in the middle of suburbia, Little Acres is designed with you in mind. Published monthly, the price is \$6 a year. Contact - Kart Berger, American Farm Publications, P.O. Box 2026, Easton, Maryland 21601. Telephone (301) 822-3965.

TIP: Miniature Pumpkins for Show - Although they look just like small pumpkins, with their orange flesh, deeply furrowed rinds and stiff stems, they are not edible. The flesh is tough, and cooking will not make it tender.

Foliage Plants Come in all shapes - We had many requests for "Wildflowers." For a copy of A Small-Scale Agriculture Alternative, "Foliage Plants" contact - Bud Kerr, USDA-CSRS, OSSA, Suite 342, Washington, DC, 20250-2200. Telephone (202) 447-3640.

"Culinary Botany - The Essential Handbook" - The 176-page book is about the increasing number of fruits and vegetables in today's retail produce department. The price of \$12 includes postage and handling. Contact - PRP, Box 5403, Kent, WA 98064-5403. Telephone Brant Rogers (206) 630-1367.

TIP: Look Ahead to Spring 1989 - Article about a dairy farmer who saved \$86 a day on feed by utilizing intensive grazing. "I wonder, how many hundreds of other small dairy farmers this spring decided not to go with a grazing system and went with planting corn and got burned. Maybe we will convert those people to grazers if they are in farming next spring." The Stockman Grass Farmer, "Roger Went Grazing," June 1988.

New Opportunities in Agriculture - Resource Sheet #2... "Fallow Deer, and Elk (Wapiti) in the Northeastern United States;" Resource Sheet #3..."Resources on Farming Alternatives for Use in Local and Regional Development Projects;" and Resource Sheet #4..."Regional and Local Agricultural Development Projects Incorporating Farming Alternatives." These Resource Sheets are free and can be requested. Contact - Farming Alternative Project, 443 Warren Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-7801. Telephone Judy Green (607) 255-9832.

TIP: Diversification - Wisconsin is much more than dairying; it is a leading producer of vegetables; \$150 million annually. Ranking 1st in the nation in peas, snap beans, beets and cabbage for sauerkraut, 2nd in sweet corn, 4th in

lima beans and cucumbers for pickles, 5th in carrots and 7th in potato production. Many growers are small scale.

[Mention of commercial enterprises or brand name does not constitute endorsement or imply preference by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.]

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 28-29, 1988 - "Adapting in Idaho Agriculture," Schweitzer Ski Basin, Sandpoint, Idaho. Contact - Vickie J. Parker-Clark, 106 Dalton Ave., Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814. Telephone (208) 667-6426.

November 12, 1988 - Eighth Annual "Northwest Regional Small Farm Workshops," Snohomish County Cooperative Extension Education Center in Everett, Washington. Contact - Mike Hackett, 600 128th St. S.E., Everett, WA 98208. Telephone (206) 338-2400.

November 16-17, 1988 - Second Annual "Make it by Marketing Conference," Willow Valley Resort Conference Center, in Lancaster, PA. Contact - Tom Becker, 306 Agriculture Administrative Building, University Park, PA 16802. Telephone (717) 757-9657.

December 4-6, 1988 - "The 1890 Land-Grant Institutions and Tuskegee University Outreach Activities -- 1890-1988, Centennial Preview", 46th Professional Agricultural Workers Conference. Contact - Walter A. Hill, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL 36088. Telephone (205) 727-8157.

January 13-15, 1989 - The 29th Ohio Roadside Marketing Conference. For registration contact Mr. Kelso L. Wessel, Coordinator, ORMC, Dept. of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, 2120 Fyffe Rd., Columbus, OH 43210-1099. Telephone (614) 292-6413.

January 31, February 1-2, 1989 - New York State Direct Marketing Conference, Niagara Falls, NY. Contact - Ken Silsby, Farm and Home Center, 4487 Lake Avenue, Lockport, NY 14094. Telephone (716) 433-2651.

Dr. Brown returns Home

Dr. Adell Brown who has been with the Office of Small-Scale Agriculture on an IPA assignment as agricultural economist the past year left August 31, to return to Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA, where he is an extension specialist in small farms and farm management. We are very fortunate to have had Dr. Brown with us and are very

appreciative of his ideas and vision in the formation and growth of the new Office for Small-Scale Agriculture, particularly the establishment of the assessment project. We wish him much success upon his return to the university. If you wish to contact him, he can be reached at (504) 771-2242.

Update on National Small-Scale Directory

Durwin Knutson is providing leadership and continues to build the national directory of small-scale agriculture. The National Directory is intended to network researchers and educators and will enable project and activity coordination to develop, as well as foster better understanding of small-scale agriculture. To understand the special concerns of small-scale agriculture a short list has been compiled. They include, but are not limited to the following topic areas:

- diversification (new crops or livestock)
- product development and promotion
- market or cooperative development
- appropriate technology
- ecological and sustainable methods
- farm management and recordkeeping
- agriculture resources and credit
- agricultural law and regulation
- rural and community development
- information dissemination and policy development.

Also, there are several categories of small-scale farmers:

1. Full-time farmers depending solely on the farm for a living...
2. Part-time farmers who supplement the farm income with off-farm employment...
3. Individuals with nonfarm jobs who get into part-time farming as a means of establishing a business entity.

Phone calls are currently directed towards state departments of agriculture. We intend to locate key people within each state who assist small-scale farmers with diversification, alternative crop development, new product promotion and finally, the creation of markets opportunities.

A final round of calls will be made to university professors and individuals within private organizations who were selected by State Extension and Experiment Station Directors, Agriculture Program Leaders or by colleagues.

The national directory is scheduled for completion within the next month and a half, at which time the information will be formatted and sent off for printing. If, by chance, you have not been contacted and have important work in small-scale agriculture, please drop us a letter regarding this, soon. Again, thank you for your response and cooperation in building this important tool within American agriculture.

LISA CONFERENCE

A 3-day national conference on *low-input/sustainable agriculture* (LISA) was held from September 6-8. *Orville G. Bentley*, (Assistant Secretary, S&E), *John Patrick Jordan* (Administrator, CSRS), and *Dean Plowman* (Administrator, ARS) were principal speakers at the meetings which were attended by over 200 persons. Under the leadership of the chairman of the R&E Subcommittee on Alternative Farming Systems, *Paul O'Connell* (CSRS), and *Vivan Jennings* (ES), discussions centered on policy expectations by USDA and Congress, review of first-year program, and perspectives on the future of the program.

Other speakers included low-input California farmer *Bob Cantisano*, *Garth Youngberg* (Institute for Alternative Agriculture), *Chuck Hassebrook* (Center for Rural Affairs, Nebraska), *Rob Wolcott*, Environmental Protection Agency, *Norm Berg* (Soil Conservation Society of America), and *Gary Reistenberg* (International Genetics and Nutrition Corp., Minnesota). A diversity of institutions was represented by those attending; for example, World Bank, AID, Tuskegee University, American Farmland Trust, Dow Chemical, Guano Corp., National Academy of Sciences, Office of *Congresswoman Virginia Smith*, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Worldwatch, McMahon and Associates, and Rodale Institute. Approximately 25 press members covered the conference, including RFD-TV, the Christian Science Monitor, Agri-Data News Service, Knight-Ridder Publications, and the Des Moines Register.

An all-organic foods reception was held the evening of September 6 on the Patio, main agriculture building. The event, featuring blue corn chips, cheeses, tofu, yellow watermelon and other fruits and vegetables, was hosted by Organic Farms, Inc., Beltsville, MD, and the Rodale Institute, Emmaus, PA.

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